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Subject: The Era of Joy.

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A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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## THE ERA OF JOY.

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“And the angels said unto them, Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”—Luke ii., 10, 11.

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This is the only day of the year consecrated purely to joy. We care not what the ecclesiastical origin of the Christmas Day was, nor what notions have environed it in other times. In itself it is the day for the celebration of joy. There are many days celebrated in all nations to commemorate important events in the history of those nations. There are days of thanksgiving to God, or of joyfulness, as the expression of gratitude for the history of single years, or for great deliverances, or for eminent blessings conferred. But Christians all the world over, on this day, whatever language they speak, under what government soever they live, join to celebrate it as the day of joy. It does not yet appeal to the whole population of the globe; but the time shall come when every tribe, and tongue, and nation, and people, in every island, and on every continent, shall join together to celebrate this one columnar day of joy. All the world eastward has been, and is still, aroused; and all the world westward as the progress of the sun goes on, is being aroused to the celebration of this day. Whatever men believe respecting Christ, when they analyze their thought and feeling they agree that this advent is to be hailed with joy. Whether he be angelic, or divine, or very God, or only eminent man, his coming is universally admitted to have been a fact of supreme importance in the history of the world.

The angel proclaimed joy to the shepherds, and declared to them that it should be a joy to all people. The priest in the temple predicted joy to the wondering parents; and Jesus himself, among his earliest words, represented himself as the one predicted to right the wrong, to expel cruelty and suffering, and to bring light, liberty, and peace to the world.

This day, therefore, celebrates an era of joy; and the whole Christian world to-day makes itself happy—or should. One day there is of

the three hundred and sixty-five, set apart, not only for joyfulness, but to remind the world that the true religion bears joy as its ripest fruit.

It will then be some benefit, I hope, if I take the occasion of this day to speak upon *the joy-producing power of Christianity*.

Continuous joy in any faculty indicates the highest condition of health in that faculty; and continuous joy in every part of the mind will be the sign, when it shall take place, of perfection in that mind. For although, as we are accustomed to regard it, pleasure or joy is not the sign of goodness, yet in the larger analysis, and in a higher way of looking at it, it may be said that the power of continuous joy in any faculty is the sign of perfect health in that faculty; and that the power of continuous joy in all the soul is the evidence that the soul itself is in a state of perfectness, and that joy is the test. Not low measures, not occasional joys, not collateral and incidental flushes of this experience, but the power of the man's nature to work it out steadfastly, is the sign and token of perfectness in part and in whole. It is therefore the final test of excellence. The capacity of fullness is the ultimate end of being: not the aim of the present, which is a developing period; but the ultimate end.

The possibility of joy continually and in the whole soul is conditioned, however, upon a state of perfect development and training which will be intermediate, and whose experience will not be like the experience of the final and ripe state. We have now only the language of education—an education in which there is much incidental suffering: yet all suffering is but the chisel's edge shaping an uncouth block to the forms of beauty and to the proportions of grace.

Let us ask, then, first, What is Christianity itself, that is said to have this power of producing joy, and whose legitimate and characteristic fruit is joy? Historically and narrowly considered, Christianity is the system made up by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. That merely tells us, however, where the name came from, and what in general are the instruments. In a larger statement, Christianity is that system of influence, which was designed of God, and which is destined to educate the whole human race to perfect manhood. It is that whole system of influences of every kind whatsoever, whether evolved heretofore, or now developing, or yet to be unfolded, by which God designs to perfect the individual and the race into manhood. It is the divine education of the race to its full capacity.

This is Christianity. It was indicated by Christ, who was the supremest Teacher in this great system. It takes its name worthily from him. But all of Christianity was not taught by Christ. Its seed forms, its germs, were all in Him; but the unfolding, as He himself declared, belonged to a later period.

“The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed.”

He said to his disciples,

"I have many things to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now."

There was a vast amount of truth that lay coiled and folded in the mind of Jesus that was not spoken.

Not, then, merely the historical facts of the Gospel, but all the vast facts of creation when they shall have grown and been unfolded through time; the whole scheme, for instance, of the natural globe, or the material world; the whole evolution of divine providence in human society; the whole work of civilization as it shall take place under the divine guidance—all of this belongs to Christianity.

The definition of Christianity is found, not in the instruments, but in the thing for which the instruments are employed. The perfect manhood of the race in Christ Jesus—that is Christianity. Christianity is not to be sought for in its doctrines, nor in its ordinances, nor in its institutions, by which it secures certain things. It is to be sought for in the things which these doctrines, ordinances, and institutions secure, or work out. That is the final condition of the nature of man himself. Just as fast as the ages find out then any truths or any processes which, applied to man, lift him toward God, all these truths newly developed, and all these processes newly evolved, fall into a the ranks and become a part of Christianity. For Christianity is the final sum of all influences that tend to produce a perfect manhood in the race.

The design of Christianity was announced by Christ; and great elementary tendencies were established or developed; but it was not pretended, it was not taught, it was not even intimated, that the whole of Christianity was made known at that time. The whole creation is God's, and therefore Christ's. The world was made by him, "and without him was not anything made that was made." And all things were made, in the whole globe, and in all its history, to converge, and through the ages in long sequences to work out that which after all is the sum and substance and heart of Christianity—the purification, the elevation, and the sanctification of the manhood of the world. And all that goes toward the development of true manhood, and the elevation of the race, whether we have just learned it, or whether it was known in the apostolic day, belongs to Christianity. Men go back to the apostles, as if things were perfect in proportion as they go back. You might just as well go back to acorns for timber for ships, on the supposition that the further you go back toward the seed the nearer you come to timber. Christianity was never so imperfect as when Christ himself lived; and the Christianity of the world was never so narrow as when the apostles handled it. The perfection of Christianity is not in its seed-form, but in its blossoms and in its fruit; and they come with the generations hereafter, when not single ones, nor sections, nor handfuls,

nor first-fruits are being developed by the power of these great agencies, but when nations shall be born in a day, and when races shall be knit together, and all of them shall be lifted up by the final form of divine influence into perfect manhood. And it is the realization of this great conception of a world's manhood that is the aim of Christianity; and this is that which it is working toward, and with a larger and larger volume of truth and of influence, through every successive great period of time.

The passage which I have often quoted, and which I shall never quote enough, in Philippians, embraces the same idea:

"Whatsoever things are true."

He has been telling a great many things that are true, and unfolding them; and he then says, "But not these alone—*whatever* things are true. When men have thought; when new philosophies have arisen; when controversies have cleared the chaff from the wheat; when, after ten thousand years of unfolding nature and the development of man in civil society, and all probings and experiments, shall have brought around a glorious circle of truth, so that there shall be a thousand stars where once there was but one in the horizon, whatsoever is true—all that belongs to Christianity." That is the meaning of the whole passage:

"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things,"

—Ponder, accept, these things. In the long flight of years, as God shall, on the one and on the other side, ripen new fruits, develop new intelligences, bring forth sweeter harmonies of social life, lift up the standard more and more, men are not to stand carping and saying, "Your Christianity did well enough for the old time; but it is out-grown. There are better things now than the old Christianity ever brought into the world." Paul says, "Christianity does not mean just the things that I have attained. It is not limited to just the things that I am telling you. It includes the ever-increasing evolution by which God means to complete the development of the race, on the whole globe, in all periods of time. And whatever is true is of Christ; and whatever is just, or ever shall be; and whatever is pure, or ever shall be; and whatever is beautiful, or of good-report among men—be in a mood, if you have any virtue or any sensibility, to accept that as a part of your fealty to Christ, and of your faith in God." That was the apostle's creed; and that is the creed which goes on forever augmenting, never abandoning the old, knitting the future to the past, and still making new discoveries—not discoveries of new truths, but of new blossoms on old branches.

Now it can be made intelligible how the joy which is the aim of Christianity may be really that which was predicted by the angels to all people; and how Christianity itself is a state designed to produce joy; and yet, how sorrow, which is the instrument largely employed in producing it, may still fill so large a place as it has filled in the history of the world. For when men say that Christianity tends to produce joy, we are instantly pointed to the wretched condition of things which exists; and men say, "Two thousand years! and where is your joyfulness?" Men say, "Christianity produce joy? Have there ever been such bloody wars as Christianity has produced? Have there ever been such quarreling and dissensions as Christianity has produced? Where is your joy? Besides," they say, "though these flighty angels may have said something about joy, what did the Master himself say? He said, 'Take up your cross and follow me.' He said, 'In this world ye shall suffer tribulation.' What saith the Scripture? It says 'They that will live godly shall suffer persecution.'" And therefore it strikes the sad ear of those that are despondent, or of those that look only on one side of this question, very strangely, when I declare that it is the aim of Christianity to produce joy; when I say that Christianity is the joy-producing state of the universe.

But I do not say that it instantly produces joy. I do not say that it produces joy always. I do not say that it is not subject to the perversions which belong to the whole scheme of this life. I merely say that it is attempting to work in man such a growth and such a development as shall bring him into the capacity and into the condition in which joy shall be the natural end of each faculty, and of the whole of the faculties. While he is being educated into it I concede that there is much suffering; but it is not suffering for the sake of suffering. It is not aimless, void and useless suffering. It is a suffering which chastises disobedience into obedience; which transforms faults into virtues; which discharges the dross, and brings out the pure gold. That is the divine idea of suffering in the world.

The woman of the house says, "I will have neatness in this household." And behold her on her knees on the floor (I am speaking of the old-fashioned times); and behold the floor all covered with dirt and soap and water; and behold the man that wanted neatness wading for his life, as it were, through the flood of suds and filth. And yet, through dirt she does get neatness. First comes the scrubbing; and after the scrubbing comes the dry and cleanly floor. And so it is with all processes of cleansing or polishing. Brilliance is what is wanted on the shield. And so it is burnished. But the substances by which that brilliance is brought out are blackening and disfiguring.

The workman's period is not always the enjoying period. It is

after the workman has let go that the quality of joy is made to appear.

We all believe that intelligence is more pleasurable than ignorance; and yet, the process of getting intelligence is not always so very pleasant. The grammars and the dictionaries have a sad story to tell when they reveal their secrets; and the process of being licked into wisdom from the condition of blockheadism is not a very agreeable process. Dark and stormy and toilsome is the road through which one must pass before he reaches the goal of intelligence.

Who doubts that the physician's end is health. That is what he is seeking; and who doubts that he seeks it by very loathsome and nauseous passages and processes? Medicine, though its immediate result is painful, has for its design perfect enjoyment.

Everything in this world is born by labor-throes; and afterward every successive stage of development in this world is born by labor-throes. And pain is God's midwife, that helps some virtue into existence, or some noble trait into a true living. Therefore, if pain and suffering have not been understood, if their reign has been prolonged, if they tend to wear out strength and activity, it is because they have not been studied scientifically in the light of the word of God; it is because they have been misused, or greatly abused. I believe that throughout God's universal realm pain is the minister of mercy, and that the truth which is declared in Hebrews is a truth as universal as the divine government, where it is said,

"No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby"—

in them that are disciplined; in those that know how to use it. That is the tendency of suffering. That is its function. Never for the present is chastisement joyous: it is grievous; but afterward you get the end, the object of it.

Now, it cannot be doubted that the progress of Christianity in this world has been very much checked, that its development has been very much restricted, by the ignorance of men. But the mere allegation that the existence in this life of Christianity has been for the production of suffering and sorrow, is no argument against the fact that Christianity is a joy-producing power in the world, that it is the instrument of joy, and that it will complete and accomplish its end.

If it be said, therefore, in Scripture, "Take up thy cross and follow me," it is because no man can follow Christ—that is, rise into the higher states of his own being—except by denying the lower ones. And the cross is always laid on the animal, and not on the spiritual. No man takes his cross up on his conscience; no man takes his cross up on his faith or hope; no man puts his cross on love. It is on pride; it is on selfishness; it is on the lower force-giving faculties or animal

appetites, that the cross is put, in order that the higher faculties may predominate, and the lower ones serve. For if we take the cross of Christ, taking it, we follow him with greater joy than it would be possible for us to attain if we did not take it.

"In the world ye shall have tribulation."

Yes, but it is that we may have greater joy that we suffer tribulation. Hence, the difference between joy proclaimed and joy realized in the world, is accounted for simply because the world is on the way toward a perfect joy. The day has not yet dawned for the complete accomplishment of it, because the race has not been developed by suffering up to that point in which joy is possible. There have been many religions which have made men much more joyful than Christianity has; but they played upon the nature just as it was, and never sought to change it. The religion of the Greeks was a gay and festive religion. They wreathed themselves with flowers; they anointed themselves with sweet perfumes; they surrounded their temples with every attraction; they invoked every pleasure that they could think of; they sought to make the hour of their worship a beautiful and charming hour. They sought joy without seeking manhood. Theirs was a religion which took men just where they were, and left them where they were, and wrung out of them all the joy that there was in them at that point of development—and that was all.

But Christianity takes men, and says, "Ye are capable of mightier things than these," and so begins to open up the nature, to accord the nature, to discipline the nature, and make manhood vaster with the volume of joy by and by wrung out of their faculties—so vast that it shall transcend immeasurably that which was possible in the beginning, or at the earlier stages.

It is a great comfort to me, that have looked with so much sympathy upon the whole long requiem of time past, and upon the groaning and travailing in pain until now that is in the world, to believe, as I do heartily believe, that the future of Christianity is to be far brighter, and that the day of struggle is comparatively past.

Do you remember that Christmas day is the first day in the year in which the days begin to lengthen? On the twenty-first, the twenty-second, the twenty-third and the twenty-fourth of December they are substantially at a stand still; but on the twenty-fifth of December, the hand of the poetic year cuts one lock from the head of darkness and hangs it like a star on the forehead of the day; and to-day is a minute longer than yesterday. And the sun will not go back now. It has set its face toward the summer; and though there are going to be great storms in January; though vast shrouds of snow will cover the ground, yet you know and I know that the sun has gone to its furthest

limit, and has begun to turn back; and that just as sure as nature is constant in her career, that sun is retracing his steps with summer in his bosom, and that there are fruits, and there are flowers, and there is a whole realm of joy, coming. You have no doubt of this in the natural world.

And I say that though the days of the world's winter are not over, yet I believe that the Sun of righteousness has gone as far away as it ever will, and has turned, and is coming back; and that there is to be a future summer of joy and rejoicing in things spiritual as well as in things temporal.

But while this grand education is evolving, we must not think that joy is absent wholly; and we must not pass by too generically and summarily what has actually been gained by Christianity in the production of joy in this world. It has not been idle. We are apt to remember the dark days, and to forget the bright ones. There has been a long line of joyful witnesses in the world. First was Christ himself, who is not misinterpreted in any other point more, I think, than in the supposition that his life was one of sorrow. There can be no question that there were moods of profound sorrow in the life of Christ, and that toward the last month of his life he was in a travail of spirit. And that he suffered at the end of it, there can be no doubt. But the earliest period of Christ's life I suppose to have been a transcendently joyful one. I believe that as a child, and as a young man, in his father's family, and under the nourishing care of his mother, there is no hint or sign or token that his life was not tranquil and sweet and pleasant to him. And there is unequivocal evidence that after he came into his ministry, and during the first years of his ministration, the life that he led was peaceful and happy. Either all moral laws must be set aside, and that without any necessity or any testimony to the contrary, or else a life in which one in perfect health, and in the consciousness of perfect power, and with the ability to work miracles of mercy, and going from day to day in the midst of crowds of untaught men, receiving their admiration and gratitude, and still conferring blessings, and saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"—either all moral laws must be set aside, or else under such circumstances he must have been joyful. All Judea was one scene of wild uproar and ecstasy. Here were villages without a sick man in them; for he had passed through them. The lame were made to walk; the blind were made to see; the deaf were made to hear; the very dead were brought to life; and households were re-illuminated that had sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. And from day to day there could be no place large enough to contain the immense throngs that came around about this divine person. And he says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." See

the mother going ecstatic from him! Is it more blessed to give than to receive? How happy he was then! See the lepers going away from him rejoicing and chanting God's goodness! But he was happier than the lepers. He enjoyed more than the blind did that he made to see; and more than the deaf did that he made to hear; and more than the dumb did that he made to speak; and more than separated friends did who received from the gulf of death to their arms, by the divine power, their own again.

The mother at Nain whose son came back from death when Christ touched his bier—who can measure the hours of ecstasy, who can measure the days of joy, which she experienced at home, after that event? But he was happier than she. Tell me that Christ was unhappy! He was the most notable exemplification of joy that the world has ever had. I do not believe that there has ever been so happy a man. And he looked forward to the coming time. He lived for the future joy. For it is said of him,

‘Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the shame.’”

It did not count on him. And you know that the apostles declared themselves the offscouring of the world. They died deaths daily. They were expatriated. They had no fixed home. They had nothing that men usually call elements of happiness. And yet, I will defy you to find in literature, ancient or modern, so high a tone of cheerfulness, so healthy a spirit, so sound an one, as you will find portrayed both in the Gospels, and in the history of the apostles. You cannot find one morbid place, nor one that tends to morbidity, in them. The most illustrious literature of the globe is that of these persecuted, outcast, wandering men—God's vagabonds. And do you tell me that joy had no fruit where such men were raised to leave such a magnificent symphony of joy?

And since the days of the apostles, although there have been multitudes of men nominally Christians who have, after all, been very little developed spiritually, yet there have been many better natures, many of the higher sort of men, who have been lifted up into that sphere where joy abode with them. Peace, which is the synonym for the harmonies of joy, has never been absent from the holy men of this world; and there is a long line of witnesses that witness of things peaceful and joyful. There is the witness of the martyr. There is the witness of men that have laid down their lives for the faith. But there is yet to be a revelation of what Christianity has done for the internal man—a witness of perfect joy, and of perfect peace. We shall not know it until the other life, except by snatches, and little insights here and there in the fragmentary lives of these holy men. But still, the whole

range of joy throughout the world has been augmented and elevated. I think that the civilized world never was so happy in ancient times as it is now—relatively, I mean, compared with what civilization is now doing. If you go back two thousand years, even, you will find it to be so. Men like to praise old times. They like to praise, for instance, the good old hearty days of England before King Henry VIII. reigned, when there was simplicity, and when there was a rude yeomanry virtue, and when men were gay and happy. I tell you that, were you to take these men up, and carry them back there, and let them sleep where men slept then, and let them eat what men ate then, and let them do what men had to do then, and take away from them what men did not have then, but do have now, you would hear the most piteous moaning and whining and complaining that ever afflicted your ears. For we have grown in the number of enjoyments, in the refinements of sensibility, in the realization of life, in all the sweet elements that go to constitute satisfaction in life. No pen can record, no tongue can tell, the growth that has been made in five hundred years. The world is steadily growing. You are to remember one thing, and that is, that one of the signs of development is the increase of sensibility. But the increase of sensibility is also the increase of the element of suffering. Every one that is really lifted higher in the scale of existence is in the situation to feel more acutely the remaining evils. And men are disturbed, not in proportion to the blessings which they have or do not have, but in proportion to the evils that yet remain uncorrected and unremoved of the lower or the animal form of suffering. A condition of things which to-day would revolutionize this nation, our forefathers considered so blessed that they gave thanks for it. The days of thanksgiving of one thousand years ago, carried forward a thousand years, would be days of revolution, because it would be considered so low and imperfect a thanksgiving that men could not endure it and would not stand it—and that, too, in the very process of unfolding and of reformation. So that while we hear a great deal of the sufferings of this world, we are not to forget that the enjoyment of the race, its capacity to enjoy, the number of faculties that do enjoy, and the higher elements of those faculties, are actually increased. While the race was an acid race when Christ found them, they are a sugar race, comparatively speaking, now. They secrete a hundred times as much of the saccharine principle as they did.

When men make wines of the juices of different sorts of grapes, they test them for two elements. They test them first for sugar. The best wine is made from those grapes which contain the most sugar. They also test them for acid. The acid-bearing grapes produce the poorest wine ; and their juices have to be purified most.

Now, men are to be tested in a similar way. If you test men of antiquity, you will find that they produced a vast amount of acid, and but little sugar; but if you test men that have been long under the influence of those things which promote Christian development, you will find that they produce a great deal of sugar and very little acid. So that in the mosaic of history, the wine produced from the juices expressed from the grapes of later generations, is far better moral wine than that produced from the juices expressed from the grapes of antiquity. What joys they had in the earliest ages were near the animal line. The joys that they had then were very imperfectly developed. But our life has gone up. As animals we are far better fed than they were. As civilians we live in a far opener and freer and larger life. As cultivated beings, as philosophers—in other words, as men that derive their pleasure not from sense, but from sensibility and from the moral sentiments—we have a hundred avenues through which we are drawing supplies where antiquity had one. And if Seneca had lived in our day he would have written amatory poetry, instead of the lugubrious maxims that he did write in his day, shut up in the narrow cell of an undeveloped period. Men in this day write a poetry of love, bright and clear, while in the olden times men wrote poetry that was sour, dark and gloomy. The whole world is better off, with all its discords. Not only is it better off, but it is getting still better off from hundreds of years to hundreds of years—croakers to the contrary, notwithstanding.

The elevation of Christian households has greatly augmented the actual happiness of the world, and opened a horizon still more magnificent for the time to come. The average condition of the common people of Christendom is far higher than formerly it was, and is still rising. So that while we are saying that Christianity ultimately will produce more joy, we must not forget that it is doing much by the way. We must remember that while by suffering, by attrition, by various things that produce burdens more or less, Christianity is taking the race up to a higher joy, on the road also are first fruits of that joy. And the world is better off to-day than it was at any five hundred years previous. The future is growing brighter and brighter. All real gains now make future gains.

It is with moral elements as it is with financial matters. The first hundred dollars which a poor man earns, and keeps clear from every claim, so as to use it for business, costs him more labor than afterwards it will cost him to earn a hundred thousand dollars. When Vanderbilt first ran a packet boat between Staten Island and New York, it cost him more to get twenty-five dollars than now it does to get twenty-five million, in the way that he gets his money. And it is so in moral things.

Early stages are the hard ones ; but as you go on, and on, it grows easier and easier.

I believe I have not used it for four or five years, though I often used it before that time—the figure that Agassiz uses ; namely, that the growth of a plant is in three stages : first, by the root, which is invisible, and is the slowest and longest ; second, by the stem, which is accelerated, and perhaps not half as long ; and third, by maturation or ripening, which is the quickest of all. The root takes a great while to grow ; the stem takes a little less time ; and when these two have become developed, they rush to the blossom, and through the blossom to the fruit. And the last of the three periods is the shortest.

So it is in history. The earlier stages are very slow ; the intermediate stages are far faster ; and the final or ripening stages are very rapid.

Now, as the past has been largely occupied by root-growth in moral things, and as the present may be considered the period of growth by the stem, so I think we are standing on the eve of the period of growth by maturation and ripening. And when the world has entered upon this last period, then things will go forward with greater strides. Then the steps will be quicker and quicker, and the fruits will be more abundant.

It is to me, therefore, a very joyful thought for Christmas day, not only that we have a religion which is joy-producing in its ultimate fruits, but that which, looked upon comprehensively, has already produced vast cycles of joy, and raised the tone of joy throughout the world, and is going forward, not having half expended its force yet, to an era in which joy-producing shall be more apparent, and upon a vaster scale, and with more exquisite fruit, and in infinite variety.

While, then, to-day, we celebrate the coming of Christ, and give thanks to God for the advent of the Saviour ; while we also recount the blessings which in our several experiences, and in our happy families, have come from our adhesion to Christ, or from our birth and education in a Christian land, and under Christian influences, let us lift up our eyes, and, if we can, enter into sympathy with God, who, sitting upon the circle of the earth, looks at all the races, and has in his sympathy and in his heart the welfare of the lowest savage as well as the highest philosopher. And let us with him rejoice that the time past is nearly sufficient in which the world has wrought the will of the flesh, that the days of the flesh are fast passing, that the days of the understanding and the days of moral sentiment are coming quick, and that the whole earth is nearing the period of its final deliverance, when the new heaven and the new earth in which dwell righteousness shall come, and Christ shall dwell with men, and they shall be his people.

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice, our heavenly Father, for all the mercies which have come to us through the knowledge of thy Son, our Saviour, Jesus, the anointed. We rejoice in the ministration of mercy which he hath begotten, and which hath been in the world, working mightily, though secretly, and which still doth work. We rejoice that the revelation of the mercy of God is growing with the ages and that God's goodness is God's omnipotence, and that God's wisdom is the power of loving and the mightiness of love that doth shape all things, and cause them in the end to conform to rectitude. We rejoice that more and more thou art preparing men to receive the mystery of divine life into their own souls, and that in every age more and more are rising up, and that the whole race doth seem to rise and follow, though with unequal steps. And we rejoice though the work is prolonged beyond our ignorant expectation, and though there is mystery yet in the evolution of things, and though by searching we can neither find them out to perfection, nor thy wondrous works among men, that our faith moves with firmer and firmer steps toward thy being, and thy wisdom, and thy goodness in thine actual power in the affairs of men; and that the destiny of the races, and of the earth itself, is more and more clear, though we cannot descry it in particulars, and though it hangs like the light in the horizon. Like the light, it portends that the night is past, and that the day is at hand. And we rejoice with joy unspeakable, at times, and full of glory.

And now we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant that every one of us may accept Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour. May we learn to love him, not as he walked in Jerusalem, not as he taught in Galilee, but as the ever-living Saviour at the right hand of God; as our companion that from above sways all things, and dwells in all that open their hearts to receive him; as known in providence, moving through all the ways of nature, and controlling still the world that was made by him.

Grant that our Saviour may be a living one, so that we may feel, in the solitude of the night, or away from all companionship other, that we have One that is near to us whose ear can hear our faintest cry; whose heart echoes every sorrow of our heart; who knows us altogether; before whom we are open and naked. And grant that we may draw near as to a merciful High-priest, whose offices toward us are offices of mercy, to rescue us from pain and ignorance, and to rescue us from the penalty of our own passions, and to deliver us from the thrall of ignorance, and from the bondage of fear, and from all remorse, and to work in us mightily a true birth of true living, so that we may become the sons of God, and be exalted by adoption into the household of faith, and become of the family of God, heirs of heaven, heirs and joint-heirs with Jesus to an eternal inheritance therein.

Grant, we pray thee, that every one that has known thy name, and revered it in days past, may to-day have a fresh baptism, and be able to accept again, with more gladness and heartiness, the service of the Saviour. And may those that are just beginning to walk, as babes learning their first steps, be surrounded with more than paternal tenderness from on high, and be borne in the arms of divine mercy, if they cannot carry themselves. May they feel that God surrounds them with infinite gentleness and tenderness and carefulness. May they not be afraid, but may they put their whole trust in him, and be sure that he will keep that which they have committed to him unto the day of redemption. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt draw many that have wandered from the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls back again to the knowledge of their childhood, and to the faith of their fathers. May they learn the simplicity of holy obedience. May they learn

to live for thee. May they discern invisible things, and know the power of the world to come. May they become friends with thee, consecrated in a new and eternal bond of friendship. May they begin that new life which shall have immortality for its blossom.

And we pray, O Lord! that thou wilt bless all the labors of thy seryants that endeavor through the year to cultivate in men the knowledge of Christ, and the graces of the Christian life. Open their understanding, that they may have a true conception, from day to day, themselves, of the way of holiness. Give them faith; give them patience; give them strength. May they not be weary of well doing. Even when they go forth sowing seed, precious seed, with tears, may they be sure that they shall come again, by and by, with their bosom filled with sheaves.

We pray, O Lord! that thou wilt grant that those that are showing mercy to the outcast, and searching out the dark and ignorant ones, and going out to the wanderers, may themselves experience new consecration, and the divine blessing, from day to day. Fulfill to them all the promise, that they shall be watered themselves that water others.

And we pray, O Lord! that thy name may be known and honored in all thy Churches more and more. And may thy people that are happily drawing nearer together learn yet more of concord and less of conflict. And we pray that thou wilt hasten the time when all Churches, of every name, shall love thee so much that they shall be able to love each other. Grant that that which is Christ's may seem inestimably precious to all the disciples of Christ. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt unite men in heart that in outward things may still be separated.

We pray for the advance of thy kingdom; for the spread of the knowledge of Christ in the desolate parts of the earth, where no man hath yet lifted up the standard of the Cross. There may the voice of the preacher be heard. Throughout the dark places of the earth, and in the habitations of cruelty, may there be the spirit of wisdom, and the witness of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men.

Hasten the day predicted, when knowledge shall run to and fro through all the earth. May superstition perish. May ignorance depart before intelligence, as the darkness of the night before the morning. And grant that nations may torment nations no more; that justice, peace and mercy may prevail everywhere; and the whole earth see thy salvation.

We ask it in Christ's name. *Amen.*

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# MY WIFE AND I; or, HARRY HENDERSON'S HISTORY.

By HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

Author of "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*," "*Minister's Wooing*," etc.

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

It appears to me that the world is running to its second childhood, and running mad for stories. Stories! Stories! Stories! everywhere; stories in every paper, in every crevice, crack, and corner of the house. Stories fall from the pen faster than leaves of autumn, and of many shades and colorings. Stories blow over here in whirlwinds from England. Stories are translated from the French, from the Danish, from the Swedish, from the German, from the Russian. There are serial stories for adults in the *Atlantic*, in the *Overland*, in the *Galaxy*, in *Harper's*, in *Scribner's*. There are serial stories for youthful pilgrims in *Our Young Folks*, the *Little Corporal*, the *Riverside*, the *Youth's Companion*, and very soon we anticipate newspapers with serial stories for the nursery. We shall have those charmingly illustrated magazines, the *Nursery*, the *Rocking-Chair*, the *First Gentle*, and the *First Tooth*, with successive chapters of "Goosey Goosey Gander," and "Hickory Dickory Dock," and "Old Mother Hubbard," extending through twelve, or twenty-four, or forty-eight numbers.

I have often questioned what Solomon would have said if he had lived in our day. The poor man, it appears, was somewhat blasé with the abundance of literature in his time, and remarked that much study was a weariness to the flesh. Then, printing was not invented, and "books" were all copied by hand, in those very square Hebrew letters, where each letter cost about as careful a bit of work as a gravestone. And yet even with all these restrictions and circumscriptions, Solomon rather testily remarked, "Of making many books there is no end!" What would he have said had he looked over a modern publisher's catalogue?

It is understood now that no paper is complete without its serial story, and the spinning of these stories keeps thousands of wheels and spindles in motion. It is now understood that whoever wishes to gain the public ear, and to propound a new theory, must do it in a serial story. Hath any one in our day, as in St. Paul's, a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation—forthwith he wraps it up in a serial story, and presents it to the public. We have prison-discipline, free-trade, labor and capital, woman's rights, the temperance question, in serial stories. We have Romanism and Protestantism, High Church and Low Church, and no Church, contending with each other in serial stories, where one side converts the other, according to the faith of the narrator.

We see that this thing is to go on. Soon it will be necessary that every leading clergyman should embody his theology in a serial story, to be delivered from the pulpit Sunday after Sunday. We look forward to announcements in our city papers such as these: The Rev. Dr. Ignatius, of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, will begin a serial romance, to be entitled "St. Sebastian and the Arrows," in which he will embody the duties, the trials, and the temptations of the young Christians of our Day. The Rev. Dr. Boanerges, of Plymouth Rock Church, will begin a serial story, entitled "Calvin's Daughter," in which he will discuss the distinctive features of Protestant theology. The Rev. Dr. Cool Zephyr will go on with his interesting romance of "Christianity a Dissolving View," designed to show how everything is, in many respects, like everything else, and all things lead somewhere, and everything will finally end somehow, and that therefore it is important that everybody should cultivate general sweetness, and

## MY WIFE AND I: A TALE

have the very best time possible in this world.

By the time that all these romances get to going, the system of teaching by parables, and opening one's mouth in dark sayings, will be fully elaborated. *Pilgrim's Progress* will be nowhere. The way to the celestial city will be as plain in every body's mind as the way up Broadway—and so much more interesting! Finally, all science and all art and all business will be explained, conducted, and directed by serial stories, till the present life and the life to come shall form only one grand romance. This will be about the time of the Millennium.

Meanwhile, I am going to furnish a serial story for the CHRISTIAN UNION, and I choose the subject that is in everybody's mind and mouth, discussed on every platform, surging from everybody's tongue, and coming home to every man's business and bosom, to wit,

### MY WIFE AND I.

I trust that Miss Anthony and Mrs. Stanton, and all the prophetesses of our day, will remark the humility and propriety of my title. It is not I and My Wife—oh no! It is My Wife and I. What am I, and what is my father's house, that I should go before my wife in anything?

"But why specially for the CHRISTIAN UNION?" says Mr. Chadband. Let us in a spirit of love inquire.

Is it not evident why, oh beloved? Is not that firm in human nature which stands under the title of MY WIFE AND I, the oldest and most venerable form of Christian union on record? Where, I ask, will you find a better one?—a wiser, a stronger, a sweeter, a more universally popular and agreeable one?

To be sure, there have been times and seasons when this ancient and respectable firm has been attacked as a piece of old fogysm and various substitutes for it proposed. It has been said that "MY WIFE AND I" denoted a selfish, close, corporation inconsistent with a general, all-sided, diffusive, universal benevolence; that "MY WIFE AND I," in a millennial community, had no particular rights in each other more than any of the thousands of the brethren and sisters of the human race. They have said, too, that "MY WIFE AND I," instead of a indissoluble unity, were

only temporary partners, engaged on time, with the liberty of giving their month's notice, and starting off to a new firm.

It is not thus we understand the matter.

MY WIFE AND I, as we understand it, is the sign and symbol of more than any earthly partnership or union—of something sacred as religion, indissoluble as the soul, endless as eternity—the symbol chosen by Almighty Love to represent his redeeming, eternal union with the soul of man.

A fountain of eternal youth gushes near the hearth of every household. Each man and woman that have loved truly, have had their romance in life—their poetry in existence.

So I, in giving my history, disclaim all other. Look not for trap-doors, or haunted houses, or deadly conspiracies, or murders, or concealed crimes, in this history, for you will not find one. You shall have simply and only the old story—old as the first of Genesis,—of Adam stupid, desolate and lonely without Eve, and how he sought and how he found her, and how they fared together thereafter.

This much, on mature consideration, I hold to be about the sum and substance of all the romances that have ever been written, and so long as there are new Adams and new Eves in each coming generation, it will not want for sympathetic listeners.

So I, Henry Henderson—a plain Yankee boy from the mountains of New Hampshire, and at present a citizen of New York—commence my story.

My experience has three stages.

First, my child-wife, or the experiences of Boyhood.

Second, my shadow-wife, or the experiences of my Youth.

Third, my real wife, where I saw her, how I sought and found her, and how we fared together.

In the course of these experiences, my good friends, you will find that we take occasion to discuss all sorts of modern and exciting topics, and to keep up with the spirit of this discussing age, when there is nothing which may not be considered an open question.

The above is the introductory chapter

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